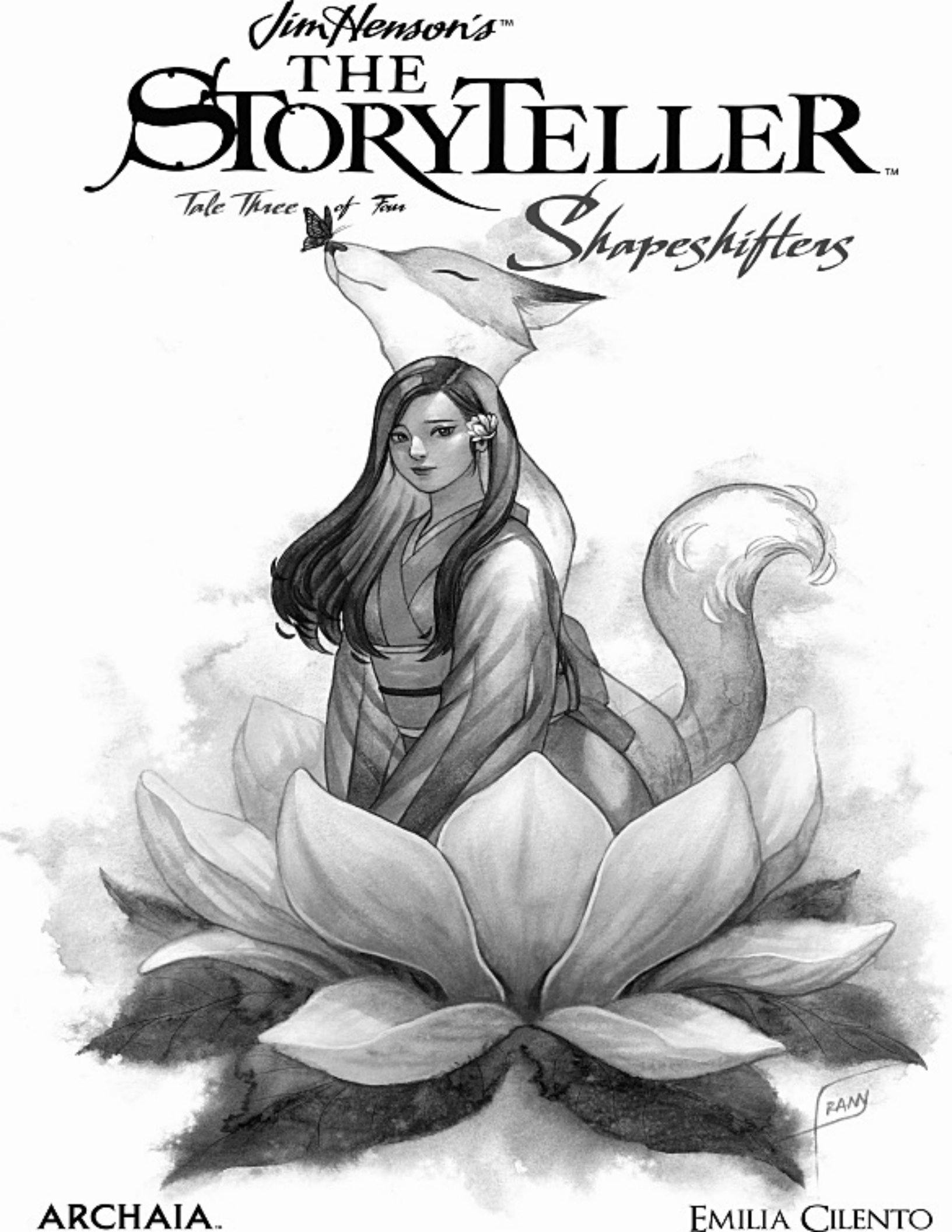
Jim Henson's™

# THE STORYTELLER™

Tale Three of Four

## Shapeshifters




ARCHAIA™

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# OME and SLEEP


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THE STORYTELLER™
Tale Three of Four
Shapeshifters

ARCHAIA™ Jim Henson™ The Jim Henson Company


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Ahhh! HOT MOCHI IS THE PERFECT TREAT FOR THIS WEATHER!
IT'S A RICE CAKE, WITH SEAWEED AND SOY SAUCE. TRY IT!
DO WE ONLY GET TWO EACH?
I'M AFRAID SO.
:SIGH:
WOOF! THERE'S A--RUFF!-- A-A--THERE'S A FOX OVER THERE! NEAR THE EDGE OF THE WOODS!

I'VE HEARD THE FOXES AROUND HERE ARE POWERFUL... DANGEROUS...
SEE ITS EYES GLOWING? IT'S A BAD OMEN!
I HOPE IT DOESN'T COME CLOSER...
SHALL I CHASE IT AWAY?
MY DEAR OLD BOY, THAT'S NO WAY TO TREAT A STRANGER! WHO KNOWS WHAT GOES ON IN THE FOX'S WORLD?
WHO KNOWS WHAT SWEETNESS, SADNESS, AND JOY SHE HAS IN HER LIFE?
I DON'T REALLY WANT TO FIND OUT!
COME INSIDE, I'LL TELL YOU A TALE THAT JUST MIGHT CHANGE YOUR MIND...
Hmph!
NOW...

A LONG TIME AGO, IN A VALLEY QUITE LIKE THIS ONE, THERE LIVED A YOUNG MAN.
HE SPENT EVERY DAY WORKING IN THE FIELDS WITH HIS FATHER AND BROTHERS.
ONE SPRING EVENING, HE TOOK THE LONG WAY HOME BESIDE THE RIVER, AS HE OFTEN DID WHEN HE WISHED TO BE ALONE WITH HIS THOUGHTS.

I THOUGHT THIS WAS MY SECRET PLACE, BUT IT SEEMS YOU ENJOY IT AS WELL. YOU'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST EVERY NIGHT THIS WEEK.
I-I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISTURB YOU! I'LL GO HOME, PLEASE EXCUSE ME--
HAHA!
BE SURE TO COME AGAIN TOMORROW!
THIS IS UNBEARABLY ROMANTIC. THERE AREN'T EVEN ANY FIREFLIES IN SPRINGTIME!
PERHAPS NOT. BUT DON'T INTERRUPT!

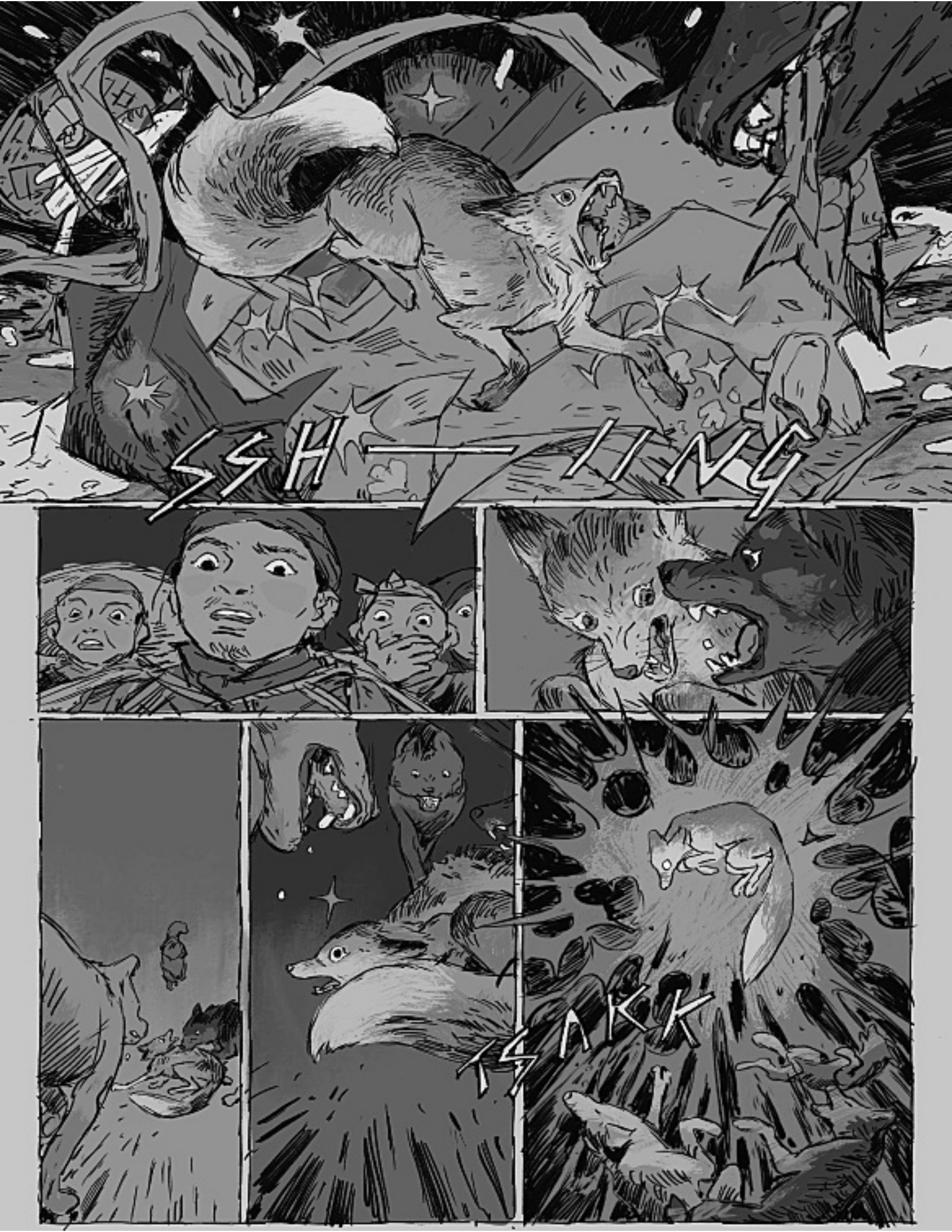
HE DID RETURN THE NEXT EVENING...
AND THE NEXT...
AND THE NEXT.
EVERY DAY...
WHERE ARE YOU GOING?
AND EVERY NIGHT.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
THEIR HEARTS GREW CLOSER.
THERE CAME A TIME WHEN THE LOVERS REALIZED, AS LOVERS HAVE SINCE THE DAWN OF THE WORLD, THAT THEY COULD NOT BEAR TO BE WITHOUT EACH OTHER.
LUCKILY THERE'S A HANDY FIX FOR THIS PROBLEM.

*SIGH* A WEDDING.
PRECISELY!
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
KUFF
SHOO!
WHAT A RACKET!
KUFF

AKOOOOO
THE MAN'S FAMILY HAD DOUBTS, CERTAINLY...
NONE OF HER FAMILY CAME! NOT EVEN HER PARENTS! MAYBE WE'VE MADE A MISTAKE... DEAR?
Hmm.
IT'S BAD LUCK TO HAVE ALL THE DOGS MAKING SUCH A FUSS.
HE SHOULD HAVE MARRIED ONE OF THE GIRLS FROM THIS VILLAGE, NOT SOME STRANGER HE MET AT THE RIVER...
...BUT BY THE END OF THE EVENING, ALL AGREED THAT THE BRIDE, THOUGH MYSTERIOUS, WAS THE MOST BEAUTIFUL AND CHARMING THEY HAD EVER SEEN.
I'M GOING TO THE RIVER TOMORROW TO FIND MY OWN WIFE!

THEY FIXED UP THE COTTAGE BESIDE HIS FAMILY HOME, AND TOOK GREAT PLEASURE IN SETTLING INTO THEIR LIFE TOGETHER.
ONE THING DISTURBED THEIR PEACE, HOWEVER... USUALLY GENTLE AND PLACID, THE FAMILY DOG'S HATRED OF THE BRIDE SEEMED ONLY TO GROW AS TIME PASSED.

UP UNTIL THIS POINT, HE HAD BEEN RESTRAINED WHENEVER SHE WAS NEARBY...
BUT OLD ROPE DOES NOT LAST FOREVER...
AND EVERY DOG MUST HAVE ITS DAY.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A-ha, A FOX IN DISGUISE! GOOD OLD DOG, I'D HAVE CHASED HER AWAY TOO!
Oh, INDEED?

THE YOUNG MAN HOPED EVERY DAY AND EVERY NIGHT THAT HIS WIFE WOULD COME BACK.
YOU CAN IMAGINE HIS MISERY--THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE, AND SOON-TO-BE MOTHER OF HIS CHILD...VANISHED!
MY DEAR! IS THAT YOU?
MY LOVE!
HE NEVER SPOKE OF IT TO ANYONE, BUT HE KNEW IN HIS HEART THAT HER TRUE FORM DID NOT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO THE LOVE HE BORE HER.
WE KNEW SOMETHING WAS FISHY ABOUT HER.
GOOD RIDDANCE, I SAY! CAN'T TRUST A FOREST SPIRIT...
NEVER MIND, SON, YOU WILL FORGET ABOUT HER IN NO TIME.

SHE TURNED OUT TO BE QUITE WRONG.
Oh MY!
HE COULD NOT BE PERSUADED TO GIVE THE CHILD AWAY, OR TO REMARRY.
THINKING ALWAYS OF HIS WIFE, HE RAISED THEIR DAUGHTER TO BE KIND TO EVERY PERSON AND EVERY CREATURE, NO MATTER THEIR APPEARANCE OR REPUTATION.
DON'T BE SCARED! SEE WHAT A BEAUTIFUL WEB SHE IS BUILDING! ISN'T IT PRETTY?
PRETTY!
Aah, NOW WHAT OF THE FOX? THOUGH SHE DARED NOT SHOW HERSELF, SHE HAD NOT ABANDONED HER FAMILY...

AND A CREATURE AS CLEVER AND POWERFUL AS SHE FOUND MANY WAYS TO BE CLOSE TO THEM WITHOUT BEING NOTICED.
?!?
...THIS TREE HAS NEVER BEEN HERE BEFORE, I'M SURE OF IT.
IT'S NOT EVEN THE SEASON FOR MAGNOLIA BLOSSOMS.

NIGHTS, DAYS, YEARS PASSED.
A KITE FOR YOU, DEAR!
THERE YOU ARE! I GOT--

TIME FLEW EVER ONWARDS...
Oh, FATHER, LOOK!
Ah!

EVENTUALLY, AS THEY ALWAYS DO, THE YOUNG MAN BECAME AN OLD ONE.
ONE SPRING EVENING, HE WENT WALKING ALONG THE RIVER, WHERE HE HAD NOT BEEN IN MANY YEARS.
YES, THIS WAS THE SPOT. ALMOST A LIFETIME AGO NOW...

GRRA
TSANG

YOU...
WAIT! DON'T GO!
PLEASE...
WOULD YOU...COME BACK TO THE HOUSE WITH ME?
YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO ANYTHING, YOU... I'LL MAKE YOUR FAVORITE TEA...
PLEASE.

MY DEAREST LOVE...
PLEASE DO NOT BE AFRAID.
COME IN AND SLEEP.
YOU MUST KNOW HOW LONG I HAVE LOVED YOU, AND HOW MUCH... IT HAS BEEN A LONG DAY, AND A VERY LONG LIFE WITHOUT YOU IN IT.

DELIGHTFULLY, THE WORDS "COME AND SLEEP" TRANSLATE TO "KITSUNE" IN JAPANESE.
AND KITSUNE IS THE WORD FOR FOX!
...SHE WAITED ALL THOSE YEARS TO GO BACK TO HER FAMILY?
WELL, YES. SHE WAS AFRAID THAT THEY WOULD NOT WELCOME OR LOVE HER, BEING WHAT SHE IS.
BUT SHE HAD A GOOD HEART! SURELY ANYONE WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED HER IF THEY KNEW...
...
OH.
SPEAKING OF SLEEP, MY OLD FRIEND...I THINK IT'S TIME FOR BED! WOULDN'T YOU AGREE?
YES, YES...
IN A MINUTE! MAYBE OUR FOX IS HUNGRY!
END

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—SCOTT SNYDER, *BATMAN*

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AND **DANIELE DI NICUOLO**
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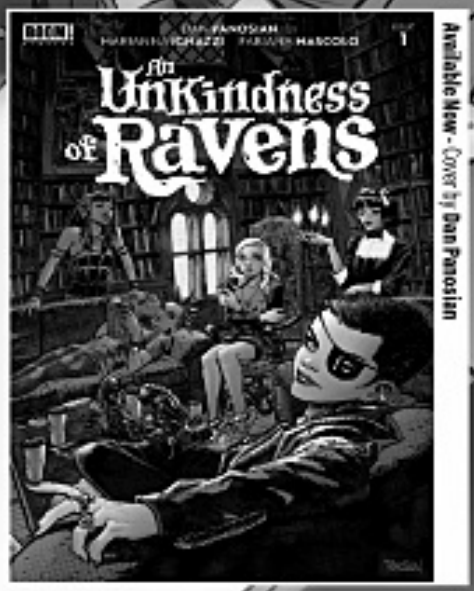


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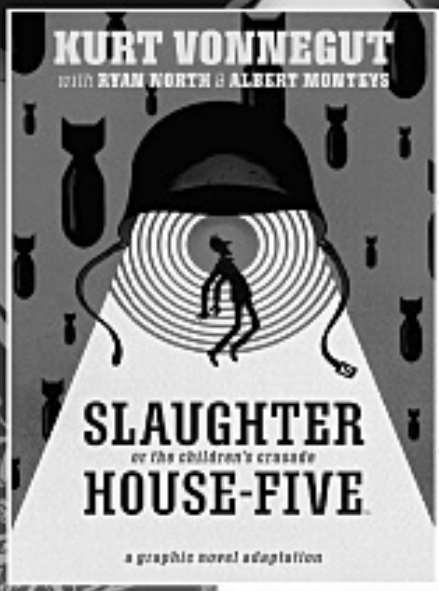


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